

SAVA 73-104

19 June 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting on Cambodia

1. At 1600 on Tuesday, 19 June, Acting Assistant Secretary Godley convened a session on Cambodia in general and Ambassador Swank's [redacted] in particular.* The group included Sullivan, Rives (State's Cambodian Desk Officer), Bill Stearman and Al Adams from the White House, Dennis Doolin and Brigadier General Hanket (plus two others whose names I did not get) from the DOD and myself.

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2. Godley opened by asking if we shared Swank's gloomy appraisal of the probable consequences of an end to U.S. bombing. I made the point that "bombing" had become a somewhat misleading generic label for three different types of activity: B-52 strikes, tacair combat support and aerial resupply. The consequences of terminating the B-52 strikes (alone) would be much less serious than the consequences of ending them all. This view was strongly endorsed by the rest of the group, but both Sullivan and Godley

*Godley's nomination is still held up in the Foreign Relations Committee, principally by Fulbright, who apparently plans to keep it on ice at least until the question of Congressional action to stop the bombing is resolved. Sullivan's nomination to be Ambassador to Manila is also being held up by Fulbright, who has told Sullivan the Committee will not even consider it further until after the House vote on the Eagleton Amendment. Martin, as you know, has been confirmed.

seemed convinced that there was no chance of splitting the pie. Sullivan in particular argued that hard nose counts -- allegedly by Speaker Carl Albert and Appropriations Chairman Mahon -- indicated that the House was certain to endorse the Eagleton Amendment, which would shut off funds for all air operations, within the next few days. The President might be able to delay up to ten days in signing the amended bill, but he could hardly veto it because it provided funds to a wide variety of essential U.S. Government programs.

3. Although those who spoke to this matter -- including Godley, Sullivan and the two White House representatives -- seemed positive that such adverse House action was unpreventable, I am still not entirely persuaded. Congressional liaison has never been this Administration's strong suit (at least up until now). Nonetheless, particularly if Laird will lend a backroom hand, I still think the Administration might be able to cook a deal with the House leadership where in return for "voluntary" cessation of B-52 strikes, the House refrained from imposing an ironclad bar on all other forms of air activity. This is not the Agency's business but privately I think it at least worth a try.

4. Even if early termination of all air support to Cambodia is assumed as a given

it was virtually the unanimous opinion of everyone else and he appeared to be persuaded. All of us agreed that the kind of unravelling process Swank described probably would take place over time in such a situation, but we felt the time was more likely to be measured in weeks rather than days or even hours.

5. There was considerable discussion of the evacuation contingency. I made the point that if we were to think of evacuation it would be far more realistic to assume that the airfield would not be useable since in any situation requiring evacuation, it would almost certainly be in hostile hands or subject to continuing harassment by fire. General

Hanket strongly seconded this argument and went on to explain the DOD planning that envisaged employing helicopters which landed near the Embassy rather than fixed-wing aircraft operating out of Ponchentong. There was, however, a problem with the DOD contingency planning since the present plans envisaged the use of marine units (including a battalion landing team) which had been on a carrier, but was now disembarked at Subic since the carrier was earmarked for use in mine clearing operations around Haiphong. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] This would run into Congressional snarls but the group felt that arrangements could be quietly laid on with the Congressional leadership to permit employment of U.S. air and ground forces to evacuate U.S. personnel in a crisis situation.

6. On the policy aspects of evacuation, the group felt that despite the obvious desirability of minimizing risks to U.S. personnel, any extensive "thinning out" of the U.S. mission at this time would be politically ill-advised, since such a move would be read as a clear signal of "no confidence" which, of itself, might help precipitate the unravelling process we wanted to prevent if at all possible.

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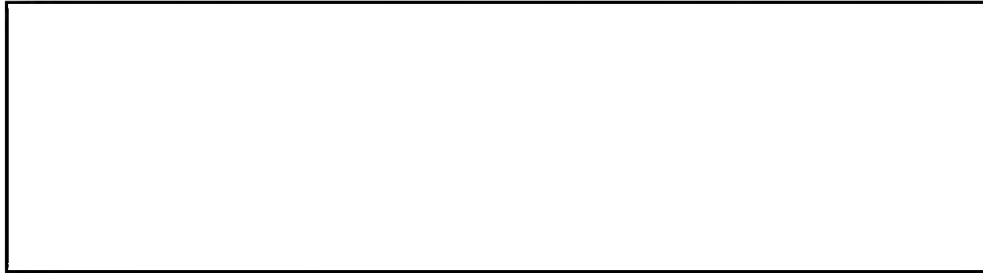
[REDACTED]

8. After a certain amount of general discussion, the DOD representatives and I succeeded in persuading Godley that most of Swank's action proposals were political non-starters which, if attempted, would compound the atmosphere of panic and impending collapse rather than contribute anything to improving the situation.

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9. There was some oblique discussion of the Lon Nol problem but those aware of current top-level thinking about it were reluctant to carry on that conversation in this forum.



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